

Exodus 3

There's a great summary of what we studied last week. Its greatness comes from its accuracy but more so because a courageous young man spoke these words to the religious leaders that hated his Rabbi so much that they crucified Him. It's in Acts 7:17-29. It would be good to read the entire section from verse 17 to 53 to get a great picture of Moses and the people he was called to lead.

We read about the 2 incidences when Moses went out to see how his "brothers" were being treated. The first time he killed a taskmaster. The second time, the self-appointed rescuer of the Children of Israel was not received well at all.

Paul writes about this in Hebrews 11:

Hebrews 11:24-27 NKJV By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (26) esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (27) By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

By faith Moses gave up all that he had and all that he would become to join with his kinsmen. Knowing about the Promised Seed, the Anointed One who lives forever, he left his life in Egypt to serve **the One who he could not see**. That's faith! Peter wrote about **our** faith the same way. Speaking of Jesus,

1 Peter 1:8-9 NKJV whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (9) receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

Moses fled, but God led. He goes to Midian where we read about how Moses became a shepherd for the Priest of Midian, Reuel. He married his daughter Zipporah which means "little bird" (although some believe it means 'fire' because of Zippo lighters).

Chapter 3 fast forwards 40 years. But the time has come for God to make a grand entrance into the life of Moses. So, let's begin:

(Exodus 3:1 NKJV) Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to **Horeb, the mountain of God**.

Most think that Mt. Horeb is the same as Mt. Sinai. I don't like to debate these non-essentials. So let's just say that it is. The text says, "the mountain of Elohim" but it's also known as the "mountain of Yehovah".

Moses is probably looking for more grazing land for the sheep. He hasn't an inkling of a thought or premonition of what happens next.

(Exodus 3:2 NKJV) And the **Angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed.

We have learned from our study of Genesis and other Biblical texts that the Angel of the LORD is God, specifically, the pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God, Jesus who was sent some 1500 years later to deliver a message – the good news of salvation!

Moses notices that there's a burning bush close by but something was happening that no amount of Egyptian education could help him to understand: the bush was burning but was not being consumed by the fire!

(Exodus 3:3 NKJV) Then Moses said, "**I will now turn aside and see** this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

Moses decides to get closer so that he might understand why the bush isn't burned up! The word "great" is often used to describe God's greatness and might or the greatness of His deeds.

(Exodus 3:4 NKJV) So **when the LORD saw that he turned aside** to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "**Here I am.**"

Why a burning bush? Fire is normally a symbol of judgment. Perhaps the impending judgment on Egypt for its treatment of God's Chosen people... Some actually see this as a symbol of grace, but I'm not convinced:

"In this picture, you have a thorn-bush (the original Hebrew word comes from the word "to stick or to prick," this meaning a thorn-bush or bramble) which is a figure of the curse (Adam was cursed to bring forth **thorns and thistles** from the earth, [Gen 3:18](#)). The "curse" is burned (a picture of judgment) without being consumed - therefore, a picture of God's mercy and grace." From Guzik's Commentary on Exodus

I think it was a simple way to get Moses attention. It wasn't just the fire; it was the miracle of not having this dried-up desert shrub burned into an ash heap!

So, when Moses turned towards the bush, it signaled to the LORD that, yes, Moses was paying attention. He was "willing" and unafraid to approach this strange occurrence. Therefore, a voice comes out of the burning bush and calls out to him: Moses, Moses".

Moses, the Hebrew Egyptian, knew enough to know who it was that Spoke to him. Moses responded with the best thing any person can say when he hears the voice of the LORD:

Heneni - Here am I; That's the translation but **what does it mean?**

It means that you are willing to listen and do what God is going to ask of you – and without asking the reason! It means that you will make yourself available to Him for His plans and purposes. It means that you will be humble, that is, you will accept His way of doing things instead of coming up with your own "best" ideas. I love the story in 1 Samuel 3 where Samuel keeps hearing his name being called. After the 3rd time, Eli tells Samuel what to do:

1 Samuel 3:9-10 NKJV Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **(10)** Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" **And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."**

The LORD was about to give Moses his marching orders. But first came a quick lesson in "holiness". **First**, don't come too close and **second**, take off your shoes.

(Exodus 3:5 NKJV) Then He said, "**Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet,** for the place where you stand *is* holy ground."

This is Moses' first encounter with the God of his fathers. He needed to understand the utter holiness of God. Experiencing God in this manner is pure grace: No one can see the face of God and live; For he *"alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power."* (1 Timothy 6:16).

Now, the ground wasn't holy in and of itself, but the presence of God made it so. The shoes had to come off because of what Moses was doing: tending sheep and certainly sheep dung and other foul things were on his shoes!

(Exodus 3:6 NKJV) Moreover He said, "I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

Then God declares something that He declared at least 11 other times: He **is** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses could do only one thing: he hid face from the LORD because of the overwhelming awesomeness of being in His Presence.

(Exodus 3:7 NKJV) And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. **(Exodus 3:8 NKJV)** **So I have come down to deliver** them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. **(Exodus 3:9 NKJV)** Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. **(Exodus 3:10 NKJV)** Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

The LORD tells Moses why He is speaking with him.

1. He has seen and heard the cries of MY PEOPLE.
2. He knows their sorrows
3. He is going to come down to take them out of Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land. It's a land of abundance. It's a land that currently has the Canaanites in it but more on that later!
4. Oh, BTW: I'm sending you, Moses, to Pharaoh to take my people out of Egypt.

That's essentially what He said. But let's look at the way He said it:

1. He says, "**My People**". These are His chosen people that will fulfill His eternal purposes:
 - a. Teach the world about the One True God.
 - b. Revere His Word and keep it available for all to hear and read.
 - i. The Jews revere the word, each and every word and letter. But many would miss the Spirit behind the words and therefore become hardened to its teachings.
 - c. Bring the Promised Seed to a dead and dying world to save all who have the faith of Abraham.
2. He listened and saw His people's oppression; He declares His love and compassion for His own. The unapproachable God is not some cold force but a loving God who COMES DOWN to save
3. In verse 8, the literal translation is "I AM COME DOWN". God Himself comes down and
4. He will work through the man called Moses.

(Exodus 3:11 NKJV) But Moses said to God, "**Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?**"

Moses could have said, "Hey LORD, Good choice! I was raised an Egyptian; I can wheel and deal in Pharaoh's court! I've been trained in the greatest knowledge that the world has known. Ok LORD, I'm ready and quite able to do this..."

But, Moses' failures and 40 years of real work in the desert has humbled him. He says, "Who am I". Are you sure that You have the right man? Hey, I have a brother named Aaron – ask him instead... The word "but" shows us that he's still looking for wiggle room to get out of this encounter (alive). God already told him about Himself and that HE would rescue the children of Israel...Moses needed just to do the ground work and as we'll see, carry a big stick!

(Exodus 3:12 NKJV) So He said, "**I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.**"

The LORD assures him that He will be with Moses all the way! It was the same promise He made to Jacob as he traveled to Egypt.

The sign is strange. The "proof" that it is God behind all of this will be seen once Moses brings the people to this mountain to worship and serve God. When Moses comes again to the Mountain of God, it will erase any idea in his mind that he was the cause of Israel's great deliverance and an even greater redemption!

(Exodus 3:13 NKJV) Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' **and they say to me, 'What *is* His name?'** what shall I say to them?"

This is just as strange. You would think that the "children of Israel" would know who their God was since they cried out to Him and, this, in effect, is their answer. They would have heard the Names of God through their oral and written traditions passed down throughout the ages. Up until this time in the Scriptures we see God revealing Himself with 7 different names.

- **Elohim (God)** - First seen in [Genesis 1:1](#) – Used 2599 times in the Bible
- Yehovah (YHVH) – understood as the ‘self-existent’ God; so holy is this name that it is not pronounced by Jews but they write it and pronounce it as LORD (Adonai). First seen in [Genesis 2:4](#) – Used 6519 times in the Bible.
- **EI Elyon (The Most High God)** - First seen in [Genesis 14:18](#) – Used 52 times in the Bible (sometimes without EI, simply as Elyon)
- **Adonai (Lord, Master)** - First seen in [Genesis 15:2](#) – Used 434 times in the Bible
- **EI Shaddai (Lord God Almighty)** - First seen in [Genesis 17:1](#) – Used 48 times in the Bible (sometimes without EI, simply as Shaddai)
- **EI Olam (The Everlasting God)** - First seen in [Genesis 21:33](#) – Used 439 times in the Bible
- **Yehovah Yireh (The LORD Will Provide)** - Only occurs once in [Genesis 22:14](#)

But God is about to reveal to him another Name:

(Exodus 3:14 NKJV) And God said to Moses, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘**I AM has sent me to you.**’ “

I AM WHO I AM - Hayah Asher Hayah – “I exist that I exist” or “I exist who exists”

I AM - I EXIST. The self-existent One.

I AM is ever-present; there is no past or future because he exists outside of what He has created (space and time and all that’s contained in this universe).

(Exodus 3:15 NKJV) Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. **This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.**’

If the above Name didn’t impress them, then the perhaps if he says “Yehovah Elohim”, The LORD God of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sent me” will convince them that God indeed has sent Moses to them. Many believe that, “**this is My name forever**” refers to “I AM”.

BTW: You know that Jesus is known for His 7 **I AM** statements. The one I love the best is not included in the typical lists:

[John 8:58 KJV](#) Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**

(by the way: in John 18:5, when in the Garden, the religious leaders asked Jesus if He was the person for whom they were seeking. He responded, “I AM”. And they all fell backwards on the ground).

(Exodus 3:16 NKJV) Go and gather **the elders of Israel** together, and say to them, 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; ([Exodus 3:17 NKJV](#)) and I have said I will bring

you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey." ' (Exodus 3:18 NKJV) Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

God tells Moses **what** to say to the elders of Israel. Then He adds instructions for the king of Egypt. The elders will accept his credentials...

(Exodus 3:19 NKJV) But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, **no, not even by a mighty hand.**

As mighty as Moses was **with** God, it would be God's mighty hand that will cause Pharaoh to let them go, not the "mighty hand of Moses". Only God deserves the glory no matter what we do for Him or how great our accomplishments are.

(Exodus 3:20 NKJV) So I will **stretch out My hand** and strike Egypt with **all My wonders** which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go.

God will personally strike the Egyptians with all kinds of wonders, that is, His marvelous and miraculous works. He will deal with Egypt for her treatment of His Covenant People and put to shame their gods who they worshipped.

(Exodus 3:21 NKJV) And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. (Exodus 3:22 NKJV) But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. **So you shall plunder the Egyptians."**

Simply put, His Grace will be poured out on the Children of Israel. Even the Egyptians will gladly give their silver, gold and clothing...just to be rid of them...

All of this to fulfill a promise made to Abraham, God's friend:

Genesis 15:13-14 NKJV Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. (14) And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

This chapter is all about the Call of Moses.

Not all callings are the same. Some come without warning: Noah and Abraham. Some come a promise made: Isaac. Some come regardless of their behavior: Jacob. Some come out of intended evil: Joseph.

All were called of God to fulfill a task that He needed them to do. With Moses, it seems that there was a very long process and a lot of "on the job training". With Moses, I see several steps:

1. There was a **crisis**: Moses killed a man

2. There was a “**setting apart**”: Moses had to leave Egypt; He was too close to the issue and in some sense, on the wrong side.
3. There was **waiting**: It took 40 years before Moses would experience God in a way he never expected! That, in itself, was a test! And the 40 years was **preparation** (although he and others seldom understood that it was preparation)
4. There was the **call**; God called out to Moses from a burning bush.
5. There was the **hearing**: Moses heard the voice of God and said, “Here I am”
6. There were the **instructions**: God told Moses what He needed him to do.
7. There were the “I am not qualified” **arguments**.

Next week we will continue with this encounter between God Almighty and the reluctant deliverer.

But today, what can we take from this account from the life of Moses?

Moses’ call was certainly dramatic. With Noah it was “**build**”; with Abraham it was “**go**”; Isaac and Jacob were connected to Abraham’s calling; Joseph never received a direct calling at all but the LORD was with him and His grace was sufficient for all his challenges – bad or good.

Now, along comes Moses. Raise by an Egyptian Princess, presumably trained up for kingship. But he killed an Egyptian taskmaster and then fled. In all these things we can see the Hand of God. But then comes the burning bush that wasn’t consumed. Then comes the voice of the LORD. “Moses, have I got a deal for you!”. Before the end of the chapter, Moses is putting up a weak fight. He continues this into the next chapter.

Have you ever been called of God? It’s not a good question to ask given our “virtual” sanctuary – I can’t see heads nodding or hands being raised. I spoke of this a while ago when comparing the call of Joseph to our Christian calling. Yes. Every true Christian was called. And like our Savior and all the great men and women leaders, shepherds, prophets, disciples, and apostles, we were all called to be servants of the Most High God. We might serve as teachers or evangelists or leaders or in any other capacity, but the bottom line and the great equalizer is our servanthood to our King and LORD.

I chose the phrase “great equalizer” to underscore that none of us is greater than another by what we do; Even if we receive those special gifts of miracles, healings, spiritual discernment or wisdom, we are still bondservants to the One who bought us at a great cost.

I know that in our culture much emphasis is placed on “doing”. Now, more than ever, in these last days, it is critical that we carry the image of our LORD and Savior so that those who are losing hope or have become disappointed or angry with God or are just plain miserable, can see in us the One who has the answers to their deepest needs and their darkest sins.

Psalms 29:1-11 NKJV A Psalm of David. Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. (2) Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. (3) The voice of the LORD is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The LORD is over many waters. (4) The voice of the LORD is powerful; The voice of the LORD is full of majesty. (5) The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon. (6) He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. (7) The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire. (8) The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. (9)

The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth, And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everyone says, "Glory!" (10) The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever. (11) The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.